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LOGISTIC REQUIREMENTS AND CAPABILITIES OF COMMUNIST CHINA TO CONDUCT MILITARY CAMPAIGNS AGAINST INDIA

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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FOREWORD

Tentative estimates of the supply requirements of the forces of Communist China in combat units currently deployed in the Sino-Indian conflict along the Tibet border are presented in this publication. The extent to which the capability of the road transportation routes in the area is currently in military use, the size of forces that can be supported by the current capability of roads, and the speed with which additional forces can be deployed for combat against India also is considered. In addition, a tentative estimate of the ability of Communist China to supply forces in the area by an airlift is provided.

These estimates are based on information available to this Office on 21 November 1962. Work also is currently underway on this problem by the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence (ACSI), Department of the Army; by the Defense Intelligence Agency; and by the Rand Corporation under contract with the Department of Defense. The definitive conclusions of the studies of these other organizations have not been available for consideration in this publication. Preliminary conclusions of ACSI, however, appear to provide for approximately the same scale of forces as those shown in this publication.

CONTENTS

LOGISTIC REQUIREMENTS AND CAPABILITIES OF COMMUNIST CHINA TO CONDUCT MILITARY CAMPAIGNS AGAINST INDIA

1. Supply of the Troops in the Tibetan Area*

At present, about 108,000 troops are estimated to be in the Tibetan area, and 31,000 of these are believed to be in the combat areas along the Indian border, as shown in Figure 2. These combat, garrison, and lines-of-communications forces require about 580 tons** of supplies daily, including 275 tons delivered to the combat areas.

If maximum use were made of present Tibetan road capability, 1,440 tons of supplies could be delivered daily to troops in front-line combat units out of a potential total of 2,000 tons deliverable daily by road to Tibet. The 1,440 tons of supplies could sustain about 170,000 troops in the front-line combat units, as shown in Figure 3, leaving 560 tons of supplies daily for use of troops and civilians not in the front-line areas.

The present roads could support the daily resupply requirements of more than five times the number of troops now in the front-line combat units; more than three times the quantity of supplies presently required by the troops located in the whole of Tibet could be brought in. On the average, all roads in Tibet are being used at about 30 percent of their maximum capability, as shown in the tabulation on page 4.

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* For a description of the road system of Tibet, see the Appendix and the map, Figure 1 (Himalayan Frontier).

** Tonnages are given in short tons throughout this publication.

	Tons per Day		
	Present Resupply Requirements a/	Maximum Use of Present Road Capability	Percent of Capability in Use
Combat areas	275	1,440	19
Noncombat areas	305	560	54
Total Tibet Military Region b/	580	2,000	29

a. See the map, Figure 2.
b. Including units based at Kashgar in Sinkiang, elements of which are fighting in Ladakh.

2. Redeployment of Combat Troops to the Tibetan Area

The Chinese Communists could provide the resupply requirements for about 300,000 troops in the Tibet Military Region. It is estimated that the internal road net and feeder lines of Tibet would permit the deployment of about 170,000 troops to the border areas of Ladakh, the Northeastern Frontier Agency (NEFA), and Yatung, north of Sikkim. The remaining 130,000 Chinese forces would be used to resupply forward units, to provide for internal security, and to maintain internal lines of communications.

Theoretically, 170,000 combat troops could be positioned in the border areas in as little as 6 weeks, but if this were done, the buildup of rear area strength would come much later. The buildup of combat troops could be accomplished by repositioning troops already in Tibet but not actually fighting and by moving seven additional divisions into Tibet. Five of these seven divisions probably would be brought in via the railheads north of the Tibet Military Region from as far as the Peiping and Wu-han Military Regions.

In order to move seven new infantry divisions to the border area in 6 weeks, the Chinese Communists would have to operate their motor

transport units and organic motor transport at a greatly accelerated pace.* Operating on a "crash basis," they could, for limited periods of 2 to 5 days, provide a capacity three to five times the normal sustained capacity of the main roads into and within the Tibet Military Region.

It is unlikely, however, that the buildup could be accomplished so rapidly, owing to the deterioration of roads, the difficult terrain, the high altitudes, adverse weather, and the problem of gasoline supply for the substantial number of trucks involved in the crash operation. A more moderate tempo in the buildup, extending over several months, would provide ample time for necessary road maintenance and stockpiling of gasoline along the supply routes, would lessen the urgency of eliminating adverse conditions caused by weather, and would compensate for possible errors in the organization of so vast a movement in this area over such a relatively short period of time.

Computing on the basis of accepted logistic factors for a crash operation, however, the time required for the redeployment of the seven additional divisions in specific geographic areas would be as follows:

a. Two weeks probably is about the shortest time that a division now located outside of the Tibet Military Region could move into Tibet and to a fighting front. The shortest route is from Ch'eng-tu to Li-ma, a distance requiring about 13 days. During this time, troops that have been located at Ch'ang-tu could also be moved to the fighting front at Li-ma in about 7 days, making a total of 28,000 troops located at Li-ma, as shown in Figure 3.

b. In about 20 days a division at Hsi-ning could move into the Bum La area, and in about 30 days two other divisions could move from the Wuhan area to the border area near Sikkim. During this time, forces already located in the Zhigatse-Gyangtse area could move forward to the

* If troops were to be moved at the estimated normal rate used for resupply movements in the area, it would take, for example, as long as 18 days to move one division from the railhead at Hsiatung to Lhasa and 30 days to Bum La, a total distance of some 1,600 miles.

border, making a total of two divisions at Bum La and three divisions near Sikkim, as shown in Figure 3.

c. In the Ladakh area the roads to the front would support three divisions in addition to the nearly two divisions already in western Tibet and western Sinkiang. Because of the relative route capacities, it is likely that one division only would move from the east via Urumchi and two divisions via Lhasa. All three divisions could be in the Ladakh area within about 6 weeks, the longest period of time required for the deployment of combat forces to Tibet.

3. Potential Airlift Capabilities

It is estimated that the Chinese Communists are currently moving only a few military supplies to Tibet by air transport.* The potential airlift capability of the Chinese civil-military transport fleet to carry supplies from the airfields at the railroad-served distribution centers of Lan-chou, Ch'eng-tu, and Hsi-ning to Lhasa, however, is estimated to be about 240 tons per day. This daily rate can be maintained for a period of approximately 1 month, after which the daily rate, because of maintenance difficulties, would be cut at least in half over a sustained period.

The airlift capability, therefore, is not sufficient to augment rapidly the troop strength in Tibet, but the tonnage moved by air would augment supplies transported by truck to Lhasa for the resupply of combat and garrison troops under present conditions. Such augmentation would be equivalent in magnitude to the support required for 28,000 troops in combat for 1 month and about half that number thereafter. Because the road capacity south of Lhasa is estimated to be less than that of the roads northward to the railheads, airlifted supplies would have to substitute for, rather than augment, supplies moving to the border areas where troops are in combat and also to troops located elsewhere in Tibet.

* For the location of airfields, see Figure 1 (Himalayan Frontier).

The Chinese Communists also have potential airlift capability to transport supplies to the NEFA and Ladakh areas. Aircraft used for these operations, however, would reduce substantially the number of aircraft available for an airlift to Lhasa. In the NEFA it is estimated that the Chinese Communists could possibly supply about 20 to 30 tons per day to Walong, in the Li-ma area, either by airlift or by air drop from airfields at Lhasa, Kan-tzu, and possibly Ch'eng-tu. In the Ladakh area, on the other hand, if the Chinese take the airfield at Chushul, supplies moved in by truck could be airlifted from Kashgar or Khotan (Ho-tien) in Western China. This potential airlift is estimated at approximately 200 tons per day for about 1 month, after which the daily rate would be cut in half over a sustained period. At this rate, an airlift into Chushul could augment overland supply equivalent to the support required for 23,000 troops in combat for 1 month and about half that number thereafter.

APPENDIX

THE ROAD SYSTEM OF TIBET

A. Main Access Roads to and Within Tibet*

1. Tsinghai-Tibet Highway

This road starts at the railroad in northern China at Hung-liu-yuan, or Hsia-tung, and is the major supply route for troops in Tibet. It extends south through An-hsi, Ta-ch'ai-tan, Golmo, An-to, Nagchhu Dzong, and Yang-pa-ching, to Lhasa. The length of this highway to Lhasa is estimated to be about 1,300 miles. Altitudes are more than 14,000 feet.** Its estimated capacity for sustained periods is 1,000 tons per day.

An alternate route for this highway is available from the railhead at Hsi-ning in north-central China, then west to Golmo, and thereafter south to Lhasa as stated above. The alternate route from Hsi-ning to Lhasa is about 70 miles longer, or an estimated total of 1,370 miles.

2. Szechwan-Tibet Highway

The Szechwan-Tibet Highway starts at the railhead at Ch'eng-tu in Szechwan Province and runs generally west through K'ang-ting, Kan-tzu, Te-ko, Ch'ang-tu, and Pang-ta and on west to Sung-tsung and Lhasa, approximately 1,200 miles. From Ch'eng-tu to K'ang-ting the altitude is relatively low, about 4,000 feet, but the road rises on the way to Ch'ang-tu to altitudes of more than 11,500 feet and to Lhasa ranges to elevations of up to 12,000 feet. Its sustained daily capacity is estimated to be 500 tons.

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* See the map, Figure 1 (Himalayan Frontier).

** Altitudes given in this report are average elevations for the section of the route under discussion.

3. Urumchi-Kashgar-Rudog Highway

This highway originates in northwestern China at the railhead in the Urumchi area. From Urumchi it goes south to Karashahr and then west to Kucha, A'ko-su, and Kashgar. It then turns southeast to Yarkand, Karghalik, Haji Langar, and Rudog. The estimated length of the road from Urumchi to Rudog is about 1,335 miles. Between Urumchi and Karghalik, elevations are about 3,500 feet. The southern section of this route from Karghalik to Rudog is often referred to as the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway and has elevations of between 11,000 and 16,000 feet. Its estimated sustained capacity is 500 tons per day.

4. Trans-Tibet Highway

This highway connects the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway with the Tsinghai-Tibet Highway and has terminal roads at two locations on each of these highways. On the Sinkiang Highway, one of the terminals is at Tashigong and the other about 30 miles north of Rudog. From these two locations the roads intersect about 130 miles to the east, forming one road that leads east approximately 475 miles. Near Seling Tsho it divides, with one road extending another 110 miles northeast to An-to and the other southeast 180 miles to Nagchhu Dzong. Both terminals are located on the Tsinghai-Tibet Highway. The estimated total distance over the Trans-Tibet Highway, therefore, is between 715 miles (over the route to An-to) and 785 miles (over the road to Nagchhu Dzong). The road passes through rolling terrain at elevations up to 15,500 feet. The sustained capacity of the road is 750 tons per day.

5. Lhasa-Gartok Highway

This highway roughly parallels the southern border of Tibet, starting at Lhasa and continuing to Zhikatse, Lhatse Dzong, Sangsang, Saka, Tradum, Nakchak, Barkha, and Gartok. This distance is estimated to be approximately 760 miles. It has elevations of about 14,000 feet. Its estimated daily capacity is 1,300 tons. From Gartok the road has been extended another 150 miles, through Gar Dzong, to meet the Trans-Tibet Highway at Tashigong and the Sinkiang Highway at Rudog, a total distance from Lhasa to Rudog of about 915 miles. The capacity of the Gartok-Rudog section is 500 tons per day.

B. Roads from Access Highways to the Borders of Tibet

1. Ladakh Area

The roads in the Ladakh area all originate from the main Sinkiang-Tibet Highway.

a. Chip Chap Valley Road

This road starts about 10 miles north of Haji Langar, follows the Qara Qash River to Qizil Jilga, and then leads west to the Chip Chap River Valley. The total distance is approximately 110 miles. This is a motorable road with an estimated capacity of about 120 tons daily to the intersection of the branch leading south to the Nischu area and about 60 tons daily to the Chip Chap Valley. The road is at an elevation of about 16,000 feet.

b. Road to Nischu

This is a motorable road that is the same as the Chip Chap Valley road (as above) to Qizil Jilga but then turns south to Dehra La and west and south to Nischu, a total distance of about 155 miles. The southern branch has an estimated sustained capacity of 60 tons daily and an elevation of approximately 17,500 feet.

c. Road to Ningri

This road leaves the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway at Lanak La and leads west to Ningri, a distance of almost 30 miles. The road, which is motorable and capable of sustaining 240 tons daily, is at an altitude of 17,000 feet.

d. Roads to Chushul

(1) Rudog to Chushul

This road runs west from Rudog to Chushul, about 55 miles. It is a motorable road with an estimated capacity of about 120 tons per day.

(2) Tashigong to Chushul

The Tashigong road through Demchhog to Chushul is a motorable road with a sustained capacity of approximately 120 tons. It is estimated to be 100 miles long. Its average elevation is between 14,000 and 15,000 feet.

2. NEFA Area

a. Lhasa - Bum La Road

From Lhasa this road travels south to Chhushu, east to Tsethang, and south again to Lhuntse Dzong, Tsona Dzong, and Bum La, at an altitude of about 12,000 feet. The section from Lhasa to Tsethang follows river valleys over hilly terrain. Its estimated daily capacity is 1,650 tons. The section from Tsona Dzong to Bum La has an estimated sustained capacity of 240 tons per day.

b. Ch'ang-tu - Li-ma (Ri-ma) Road

Part of this road, from Ch'ang-tu, is over the Szechwan - Tibet Highway (described above) to a place called Nankhazod (approximately 29°32' N - 96°54' E). From Nankhazod the second part of the road generally follows a river curving first southeast, then southwest, and finally almost due south, to Li-ma. The total distance from Ch'ang-tu to Li-ma is about 300 miles. The second part of the road has an average elevation of about 9,500 feet. It has an estimated sustained capacity of 240 tons daily.

3. South Central Tibet

Lhasa - Sikkim Road

From Lhasa this road extends southwest to Nangkartse Dzong, west to Gyangtse, and south to Khangmar, Phari Dzong, and Yatung, a distance of approximately 230 miles. It traverses hilly and mountainous terrain at elevations of about 13,000 feet. The capacity of this route is variously estimated at from 290 to 800 tons per day. In the absence of a precise estimate of the road's capacity it has been taken to be 360 tons per day.

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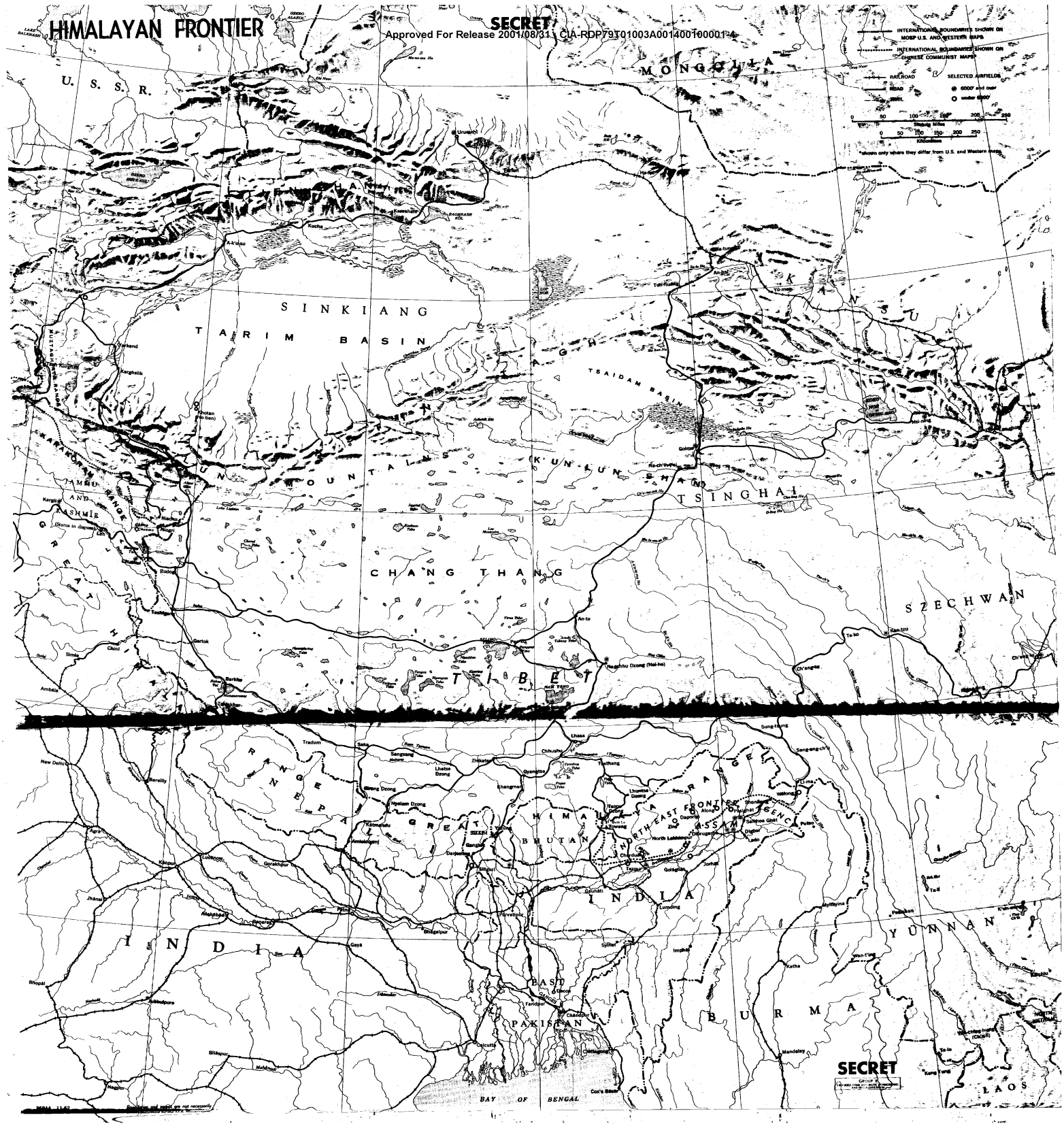

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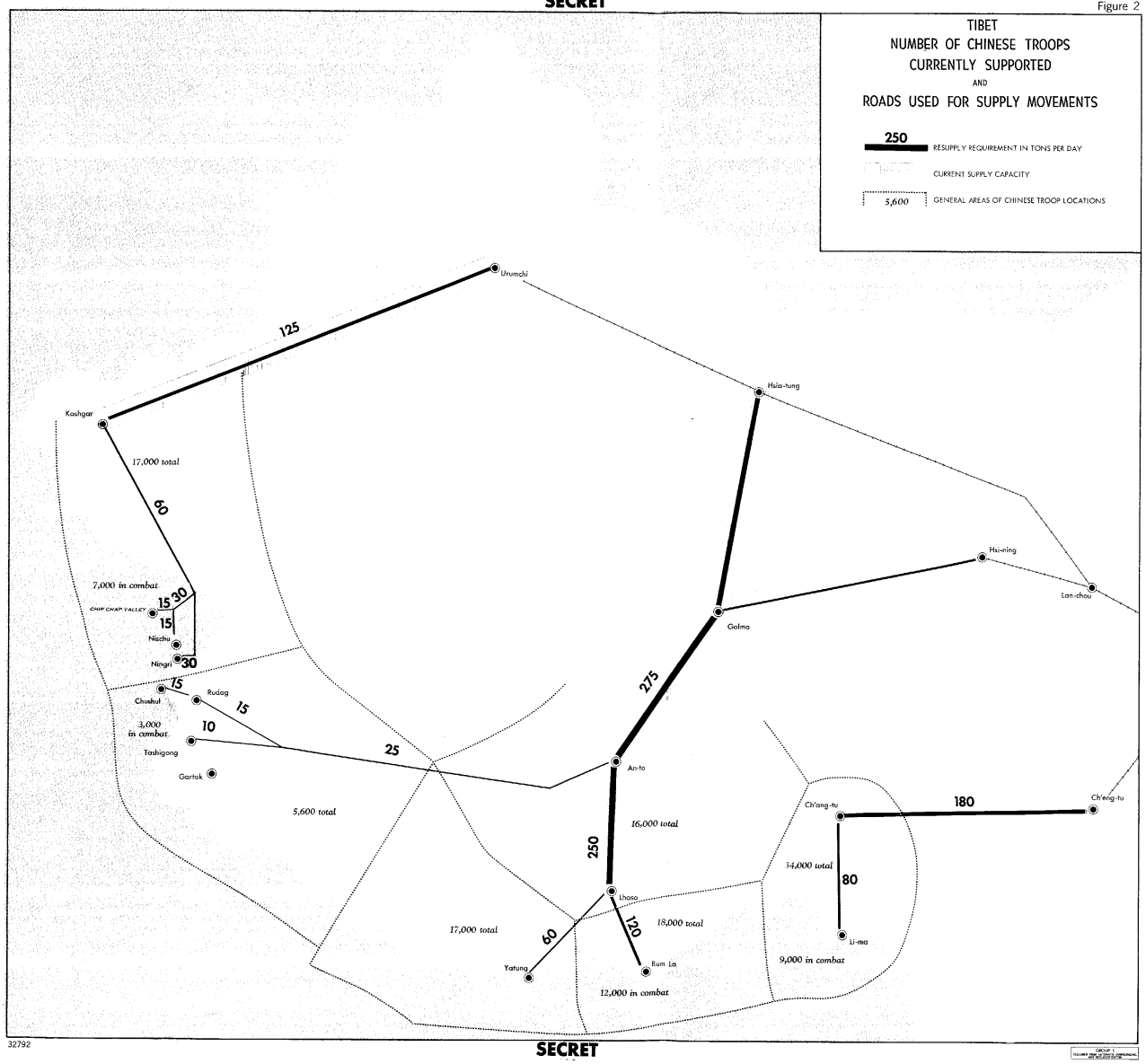

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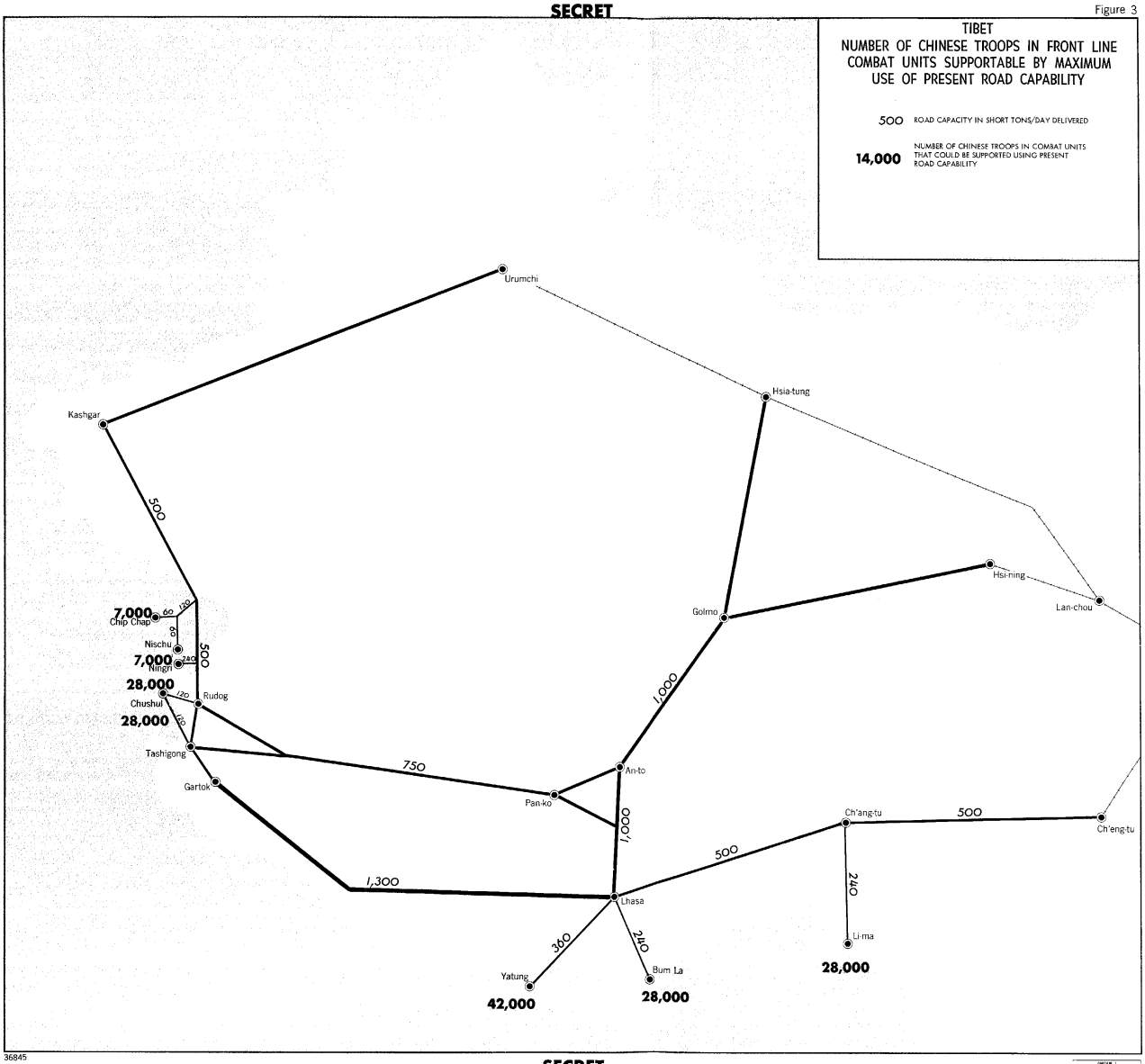

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